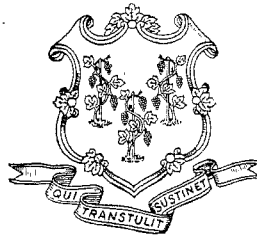


SENATOR BETH BYE

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State of Connecticut  
SENATE

*Chair*  
Appropriations Committee

*Vice Chair*  
Childrens Committee

*Member*  
Education Committee  
Judiciary Committee  
Legislative Management Committee

February 3, 2015

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Housing**  
**RE: SB 408 An Act Concerning Youth Homelessness**

Senator Winfield, Representative Butler, and members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Beth Bye, State Senator representing the 5<sup>th</sup> District Towns of West Hartford, Farmington, Burlington, and Bloomfield.

I come to you today in support of SB 408 which aims to reduce homelessness among youth populations. The number of youth in Connecticut affected by homelessness is unclear because obtaining accurate counts proves challenging. Many youth experiencing homelessness are invisible because they find short-term shelter instead of utilizing DCF housing options. These individuals are particularly vulnerable to victimization and exploitation so they are difficult to count.

The first study in the state of Connecticut, *Invisible No More*, was conducted in 2013. This study provided a basic understanding of the challenges that homeless youth face across the state by identifying affected individuals in Hartford, New Haven, New London, and Bridgeport. This study indicated that such victimization results in absenteeism in school, higher rates of mental health disorders, and cases of physical and sexual assault, among other issues.

There is a need for further outreach on behalf of homeless youth. However, this necessary expansion is impossible without first identifying youth both affected and at risk of homelessness. This population includes LGBTQ youth, youth in the juvenile justice system, teen parents, sexually exploited youth, and youth with mental illness and developmental disabilities. Individuals who age out of DCF's youth services face many of the same challenges and require transitional care.

The Department of Housing is an essential partner in the process of obtaining housing assistance for homeless youth. The lack of data indicates a need for further research at the local, state, and federal levels. I ask the Housing Committee to draft a bill that:

1. will obtain better counts of homeless youth
2. provides guidelines for transitional and respite housing for youth
3. provides specialized training for working with homeless LGBTQ youth who are disproportionately likely to be homeless

DCF and the Housing Committee need to work together to address this big challenge faced by young citizens across the State of Connecticut. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of this important bill and I am open to any questions the members might have.

Thank you,

Beth Bye

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Beth Bye", written over the printed name.